

TRANSGENDER BUTCH

Butch/FTM Border Wars and the Masculine Continuum

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In addition to the definitional and legal wars, there are less obvious forms of sexual political conflict which I call the territorial or border wars. The processes by which erotic minorities form communities and the forces that seek to inhibit them lead to struggles over the nature and boundaries of sexual zones.

—Gayle Rubin, “Thinking Sex”

As the visibility of a transsexual community grows at the end of the twentieth century in the United States and as female-to-male transsexuals (FTMs) become increasingly visible within that community, questions about the viability of queer female butch identities become crucial and unavoidable. Transgender Butch describes a form of gender transition that could be crucial to many gender-queer dykes’ senses of embodiment, sexual subjectivity, and even gender legitimacy. Some lesbians seem to see FTMs as traitors to a “women’s” movement who cross over and become the enemy. Some FTMs see lesbian feminism as a discourse that has demonized them and their masculinity. Some butches consider FTMs to be butches who “believe in anatomy,” and some FTMs consider butches to be FTMs who are too afraid to transition. The border wars between transgender butches and FTMs seem to proceed on the assumption, shared by all sides, that masculinity is a limited resource, available to only a few in ever-decreasing quantities. Or else, we see masculinity as a set of protocols that should be agreed upon in advance. One of the issues I want to take up here is what model of masculinity is at stake in debates between butches and FTMs and what, if anything, separates butch masculinity from transsexual masculinities. I will examine some of the identifications that have been argued about (the stone butch in particular) and attempt to open

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the possibility of a dialogue between FTM and butch subjects that allows for cohabitation in the territories of queer gender.

Masculinity in this context is of course what we make it. It has important relations to maleness, increasingly interesting relations to transsexual maleness, and a historical debt to lesbian butchness. Masculinity has functioned as a primary signifier of lesbian desire and embodiment since the beginning of the twentieth century in the United States.¹ There is also a much longer history of gender variance in women that precedes the invention of modern homosexuality and that has been associated variously with sexual appetite, social pathology, and bodily monstrosity.² Queer historians and theorists tend to agree that the pathologizing medical definition of inversion was appropriated by lesbians throughout the century, and we call this series of appropriations “butch.”³ By the second half of the twentieth century, medical technology became available for the surgical reassignment of gender, and the category of the transsexual emerged out of a very different nexus of gender variance, embodiment, and sexual subjectivity.⁴ Recently, transsexual communities have become visible in many U.S. urban areas, and a transsexual activist response to transphobia (separate from homophobia and not assimilable under the banner “queer” to the extent that *queer* has been assumed to mean gay and lesbian) has animated demands for special health care considerations and legal rights. However, the new visibility of U.S. transsexual communities, and particularly of FTM transsexuals, has also led to a border war of sorts, such as I’ve just described, between FTMs and butches over the meanings of various masculine embodiments. What is the relation, if any, of butch to FTM? How and where do lesbian and transsexual definitions overlap? Where and how do lesbian masculinities tend to erase the claims of FTM embodiments and vice versa?

Transgender Butch

Transsexuality has become something of a favored topic in gender studies because it seems to offer case studies for demonstrations of various gender theories. Since transsexual self-accountings are all too often left out of the theorizations of gender variance, some critical animosity has developed between transsexual and nontranssexual theorists. C. Jacob Hale has informally published a set of rules for nontranssexuals writing about transsexuality that suggest necessary and important parameters for nonidentity-based writings.⁵ As a nontranssexual who has written about transsexuality, I would like first to comment in this essay, in dialogue with Hale, about the important skirmishes between FTM and

butch theorists, my role in them, and the kinds of knowledge these skirmishes produce.

In 1994, I published an essay titled “F2M: The Making of Female Masculinity” in a volume called *The Lesbian Postmodern*.⁶ My avowed intention in the article was to examine the various representations of transsexual bodies and transgender butch bodies that surfaced around 1990–1991, largely within lesbian contexts. Much to my surprise, my essay was regarded with much suspicion and hostility by some members of FTM International, a San Francisco–based transsexual men’s group. These reactions caused me to look carefully at the kinds of assumptions I was making about transsexuality and about the kinds of continuities or overlaps I presumed between the categories of FTM and butch. My intention here is neither to apologize for that essay nor simply to reiterate my position; rather, I want to use the constructive criticism I received about that article to reconsider the various relations and nonrelations between FTM and butch subjectivities and bodies.

In hindsight, I can see that in “F2M” I was trying to carve out a subject position that might usefully be called “Transgender Butch.” At present, to adopt the moniker *FTM* signals a radical shift both in one’s body and one’s social identity, a shift that, at least heretofore, has suggested to some that *butch* is a stable signifier by comparison. But the shifts and accommodations made in most cross-gender identifications, whether aided by surgery or hormones or not, involve a great deal of instability and transitivity. In the term “transgender butch” I seek to convey some of this movement.

In “F2M,” I attempted to describe the multiple versions of masculinity that seemed to be emerging simultaneously out of both lesbian and transsexual contexts. My project was not a fact-finding ethnography about FTMs, nor did it examine the mechanics, trials, tribulations, benefits, or necessities of body alteration. Rather, I asked discursive and possibly naive questions such as, Why, in this age of gender transitivity, when we have agreed that gender is a social construct, is transsexuality a wide-scale phenomenon? Why has there been so little focus on FTMs? And, finally, why are we not in what Sandy Stone calls a “posttranssexual era”?⁷ My questions presumed that some forms of transsexuality represented gender essentialism, but from this presumption some people understood me to be saying that butchness was postmodern and subversive while transsexualism was dated and deluded. This was not my intent. Rather, I was trying to create a theoretical and cultural space for the transgender butch that did not presume transsexuality as its epistemological frame. I was also implicitly examining the possibility of the nonoperated-upon transgender-identified person.

There was some debate about “F2M” in the pages of the *FTM Newsletter*. The editor, Jamison Green, took me to task for presuming to speak for FTMs (and for misrepresenting them), and a review essay by Isabella, the female partner of an FTM, cast me in the role of a lesbian feminist who wanted transsexuals to disappear within some postmodern proliferation of queer identities. Isabella noted that I focused upon film and video in my essay (upon representations, in other words, as opposed to “real” accounts) and accused me of failing to account for the real lives and words of “the successfully integrated post-op FTM” in my theory.⁸ She went on to suggest that I was not interested in the reality of transsexuality because “it is the fluidity, the creation and dissolution of gender ‘fictions’ that is so fascinating” to me.⁹ I took this criticism very seriously if only because I had been trying to do the very opposite of what I was being accused of doing and because my position on transsexuality is not really akin to the kinds of lesbian feminist paranoia articulated by the likes of Janice Raymond.¹⁰ By arguing in “F2M” that “desire has a terrifying precision,”¹¹ I was trying to get away from the tendency among some critics to see queer theory as a celebration of gender fluidity (celebrating an ideal of being butch *and* femme, for example). I wanted instead to talk about the ways in which desire and gender and sexuality tend to be remarkably rigid.¹² Rather than consent to the prevalent opinion within queer criticism, I wanted to question the belief in fluid selves. Moreover, I wanted to challenge the assumption that fluidity and flexibility are always and everywhere desirable. At the same time, I was trying to show that many (if not most or even all) sexual and gender identities involve some degree of movement (not free-flowing but very scripted) between bodies, desires, transgressions, and conformities. We do not necessarily shuttle back and forth between sexual roles and practices at will, but we do tend to adjust, accommodate, change, alter, reverse, slide, and move between moods and modes of desire. Finally, I wanted to resist the hierarchy assumed in Isabella’s critique that places “the successfully integrated post-op FTM” at the apex of cross-gender transition, that indeed represents transition’s end—and success. In such a context, the bodies I had focused on in my essay could be read only as preoperative versions of the real thing, as bodies that fail to integrate.

Another more recent article critiquing “F2M” also accused it of advocating a simple celebratory mode of border crossing. In “No Place Like Home: The Transgendered Narrative of Leslie Feinberg’s *Stone Butch Blues*,” Jay Prosser sets up “F2M” as a prime example of queer theory’s fixation on the transgender body.¹³ This article pits queer theory against transgender identity in the form of a polemic: queer theory represents gender within some notion of postmodern fluidity and

fragmentation while transgender theory eschews such theoretical free fall and focuses instead on a grounding and stabilizing “subjective experience” (490). Queer theories of gender, in Prosser’s account, emphasize the performative, while transgender theories emphasize narrative; queer theories of gender are constructivist, and transgender theories are essentialist. Ultimately, Prosser proposes that transgenderism be separated out from “generic queerness” in order to build a transgender community (508).

While one might want to credit Prosser’s article with providing a conceptual base for some transsexual activism, ultimately I think the opposition he describes between transgender and queer identities is false. The falsity of this opposition is revealed most tellingly in his reading of Feinberg, particularly in the confusing, inconsistent distinctions he makes between the terms *queer*, *transgender*, and *transsexual*. Sometimes *transgender* and *transsexual* are synonymous for him, and he sets them in opposition to *queer*, which is presented as maintaining the same relationship between gender identity and body morphology as is enforced within heteronormative culture. Sometimes *transgender* and *queer* are synonyms whose disruptive refigurations of desires and bodies are set in opposition to (non-homosexual) transsexuality’s surgical and hormonal recapitulation of heteronormative embodiment—its tendency to straighten the alignment between body and identity.

This conceptual confusion is especially clear in Prosser’s attempt to read *Stone Butch Blues* according to the generic conventions of transsexual autobiographical narrative, even though the main character, Jess Goldberg, chooses to halt his transition from female to male.¹⁴ Although Jess says, “I didn’t feel like a man trapped in a woman’s body, I just felt trapped,” Prosser reads this as paradigmatically transsexual, “driven by the subject’s sense of not being at home in his/her body.”¹⁵ Although explicitly arguing for a transgender/transsexual distinctiveness to Feinberg’s narrative, Prosser’s reading does far more to consolidate the relationship between transgender/queer. Jess’s general claim, refusing further specificity, about feeling trapped shows that many subjects, not only transsexual ones, feel trapped or unsettled in their bodies. Prosser’s assertion of transsexual specificity thus fails to hold. Prosser himself, at the end of his essay, even cites from Feinberg’s nonfiction a list of kinds of people who might experience gender discomfort to some degree or another, to the extent that their bodies cannot function as homes: “transvestites, transsexuals, drag queens and drag kings, cross-dressers, bull-daggers, stone butches, androgynes etc.”¹⁶

But this was exactly my point in F2M: there are a variety of gender-outlaw bodies under the sign of nonnormative masculinities and femininities. The task at

hand is not to decide which of these represents the place of most resistance but to begin the work of documenting their distinctive features. As Prosser notes, the place from which one theorizes an embodied “home” location for the subject alters completely the models of gender and sexuality one produces. The place from which I chose to begin the work of examining the specificity of embodied desires was the butch—indeed, the stone butch; I examined FTM subjectivity only as it compared to butch identifications. As I will discuss below, when theorized from the perspective of the FTM, the stone butch becomes pre-FTM, a penultimate stage along the way to the comfort of completed transsexual transformation; however, when theorized from the perspective of the butch, the stone butch becomes a nonsurgical and nonhormonal transgender identification that does not need sex reassignment surgery. It was my desire, apparently unrealized, to avoid either of these foreclosures that drove my own analysis in “F2M.”

My essay also found a supporter in the *FTM Newsletter*. Jordy Jones, an FTM performance artist from San Francisco, responded to some of the criticisms of my article by suggesting that the notion that I had advanced of gender as a fiction did not necessarily erase the real-life experiences of transsexuals. Rather, he suggested, it describes the approximate relation between concepts and bodies. Furthermore, Jones objected to the very idea that transsexual experience could be represented in any totalizing or universal way. He wrote:

Not everyone who experiences gender dysphoria experiences it in the same way, and not everyone deals with it in the same way. Not all transgendered individuals take hormones, and not everyone who takes hormones is transgendered. I have a (genetically female) friend who identifies as male and passes perfectly. He’s never had a shot. I certainly know dykes who are butcher than I could ever be, but who wouldn’t consider identifying as anything other than women.¹⁷

Jones eloquently and forcefully articulates the limits of a monolithic and absolute model of hormonally and surgically defined transsexual identity. His description of the wild variability of masculinities and identifications across butch and transsexual bodies refuses, on the one hand, any notion of a butch-FTM continuum; on the other hand, it acknowledges the ways in which butch and FTM bodies are read against and through each other for better or for worse. His understanding of transgender variability produces an almost fractal model of cross-gender identifications that can never return to the binary models of before and after transition, transsexual and nontranssexual, or butch and FTM.

The Masculine Continuum

Needless to say, I have learned a great deal from these various interactions and conversations, and I want to use them to resituate “F2M” in terms of a continuing border war between butches and FTMs. In this article, I will try again to create an interpretive model of transgender butchness that refuses to invest in the notion of some fundamental antagonism between lesbian and FTM subjectivities. This is not to ignore, however, the history of lesbian feminist opposition to transsexuals which has been well documented by Stone.¹⁸ In “The *Empire* Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto,” Stone shows how Raymond and other feminists in the 1970s and 1980s (Mary Daly, for example) saw MTFs as phallographic agents who were trying to infiltrate women-only spaces. Recently, some lesbians have voiced their opposition to FTMs, characterizing them as traitors and as women who literally become the enemy.¹⁹ More insidiously, lesbians have tended to erase FTMs by claiming transsexual males as lesbians who lack access to a liberating lesbian discourse. So, for example, Billy Tipton, the jazz musician who lived his life as a man and who married a woman, is often represented within lesbian history as a lesbian woman forced to hide her gender in order to advance within her profession, rather than as a transsexual man living within his chosen gender identity. In an article on “The Politics of Passing,” for example, Elaine K. Ginsberg rationalizes Tipton’s life, saying: “He lived his professional life as a man, presumably because his chosen profession was not open to women.”²⁰ Many revisionist accounts of transsexual lives rationalize them out of existence in this way or through misgendered pronouns and thus do real damage to the project of mapping transgender histories.

So while it is true that transgender and transsexual men have been wrongly folded into lesbian history, it is also true that the distinctions between some transsexuals and lesbians may at times become quite blurry. Many FTMs do come out as lesbians before they come out as transsexuals (many, it must also be said, do not). For this reason alone, hard-and-fast distinctions between lesbians and FTMs are not always helpful. The editors of *Dagger: On Butch Women*, for example, include interviews with FTMs as part of their survey of an urban butch scene.²¹ The five FTMs interviewed all testify to a period of lesbian identification. Shadow admits that “the dyke community’s been really great, keeping me around for the last 12 years” (154); Mike says that he never really identified as female but that he did “identif[y] as a lesbian for a while” because “being a dyke gave me options” (155). Similarly, Billy claims that he feels neither male nor female but that he did “go through the whole lesbian separatist bullshit” (155). Like Shadow,

Eric feels that for a while “the lesbian place was really good for me” (156), and, finally, Sky suggests that while certain individuals in the dyke community are hostile to him, “I’m forty years old and I’ve been involved with dykes for nearly half my life. I’m not going to give that up” (158). Obviously, these FTM voices are quite particular, and they in no way represent a consensus (or even a dominant version) of the relations between FTM and dyke communities. They have, in fact, been carefully chosen to fit into a collection on lesbian masculinities. However, these transsexual men do articulate one very important line of affiliation between transsexualities and lesbian identities. Many transsexual men successfully identify as butch in a queer female community before they decide to transition. Once they have transitioned, many transsexual men want to maintain their ties to their queer lesbian communities. Much transsexual discourse now circulating, however, tries to cast the lesbian pasts of FTMs as instances of mistaken identities or as efforts to find temporary refuge within some queer gender-variant notion of “butchness.”

In his *Dagger* interview, Billy hints at the kinds of problems some pretransition transgender men experience when they identify as lesbians. Billy recalls: “I’ve had this problem for ten years now with women being attracted to my boyishness and my masculinity, but once they get involved with me they tell me I’m too male” (156). Billy crosses the line for many of his lovers because he wants a real mustache and a real beard and does not experience his masculinity as a fad or a game. Billy’s experience testifies to the ways in which masculinity within some lesbian contexts presents a problem when it becomes too “real” or when some imaginary line has been crossed between play and seriousness. This also makes lesbian masculinity sound like a matter of degree. Again, this kind of limited understanding of lesbian masculinity has a history within lesbian feminism. As many historians have pointed out, male identification was an accusation leveled at many butches in the early days of lesbian feminism.²² It is hardly surprising, then, to find a residue of this charge in the kinds of judgments made against FTMs by lesbians in contemporary settings.

The real problem with this notion of lesbian and transgender masculinities lies in the way it suggests a masculine continuum that looks something like this:

ANDROGYNY—SOFT BUTCH—BUTCH—STONE BUTCH\\TRANSGENDER BUTCH—FTM
NOT MASCULINE—————VERY MASCULINE.

Such a model clearly has no interpretive power when we return to Jordy Jones’s catalogue of transgender variety. For Jones, the intensity of masculinity is not

accounted for by transsexual identification. Furthermore, as Jones points out, “not everyone who experiences gender dysphoria deals with it in the same way.”²³ Gender dysphoria can be read all the way along the continuum, and it would not be accurate to make gender dysphoria the exclusive property of transsexual bodies nor to surmise that the greater the gender dysphoria the likelier a transsexual identification. At the transgender end of the spectrum, the continuum model miscalculates the relation between bodily alteration and degree of masculinity; at the butch end of the spectrum, the continuum model makes it seem as if butchness is sometimes just an early stage of transsexual aspiration. The continuum model, moreover, often contains a distinct rupture between stone butch and transgender butch as if a gulf exists between all butches and all transgenders. Stone butchness, for example, is very often seen as a compromise category between lesbian and FTM. It is defined, therefore, by sexual dysfunction rather than sexual practice. Stone butch might be seen as a compromise category, a last-ditch effort to maintain masculinity within female embodiment. The expectation, of course, is that such an effort will fail, and the stone butch will become fully functional once she takes steps toward transitioning into transsexual manhood.

In an article in *Girlfriends* magazine on “What is Stone Butch—Now?” (as opposed to stone butch in the 1950s), Heather Findlay interviews stone butches about their various modes of gender and sexual identification.²⁴ Stone butch for the purposes of this article occupies “a gray area” between lesbian and FTM.²⁵ One of Findlay’s informants simply calls him/herself Jay and relates that he/she is considering transitioning.²⁶ Jay tries to define the difference between being stone and being transsexual: “As a stone butch you have a sense of humor about your discomfort in the world. As an FTM, however, you lose that sense of humor. Situations that were funny suddenly get very tragic.”²⁷ Obviously, in this comment, Jay already seems to be speaking from the perspective of an FTM. In order to do so, s/he must cast the stone butch as playful in comparison to the seriousness of the FTM transsexual. The stone butch laughs at her gender discomfort while the FTM finds his discomfort to be a source of great pain. The stone butch manages her gender dysphoria, according to such a model, but the FTM cannot.²⁸ Again, these oppositions between FTM and butch come at the expense of a complex butch subjectivity and also work to totalize both categories in relation to a single set of experiences. As other stone butches interviewed in the article attest, however, being stone might mean moving in and out of gender comfort and might mean a very unstable sense of identification with lesbianism or femaleness. In order to separate the category of FTM from the category of butch, Jay must assign butch to femaleness and FTM to maleness.

The tendency to assign distinct gender identities to extremely (and deliberately) gender-ambiguous bodies has a history within transsexual autobiography. In Mario Martino's autobiography *Emergence*, Martino goes to great lengths to distinguish himself from lesbians—and from butches in particular—as he negotiates the complications of pretransition identifications.²⁹ Pretransition, Mario falls in love with a young nurse, Becky, to whom he insists, “You and I are not lesbians. We relate to each other as man to woman, woman to man” (132). One day, the head nurse on Becky's ward had inquired about her “butch,” and Becky, being unfamiliar with the term, comes home and asks, “Mario, what's a butch?” He writes, “I could actually feel my skin bristle” and gives her a simple answer: “A butch is the masculine member of a lesbian team. That would make you the feminine member. But, Becky, honest-to-God, I don't feel that we're lesbians. I still maintain I should have been a male” (141). Becky seems satisfied with the answer but her question plagues Mario long into the night: “The word *butch* magnified itself before my eyes. *Butch* implied female—and I had never thought of myself as such” (142). Mario's concern that she/he will be mistaken for a lesbian is reiterated in Jay's careful distinctions in the *Girlfriends* article between lesbian and transsexual masculinities. In *Emergence*, lesbianism haunts the protagonist. It threatens to swallow his gender specificity and discredit his transsexuality. Unfortunately, Martino's efforts to disentangle his maleness from lesbian masculinity tend to turn butchness into a stable female category.

Mark Rees's *Dear Sir or Madam* is another transsexual autobiography that magnifies the gulf between butch and FTM in order to mark the boundaries of transsexual identity.³⁰ Rees obsessively notes his difference from lesbians. Upon attending a lesbian club prior to transition, sometime in the early 1960s, he feels assured in his sense of difference because, he notes, “the women there didn't want to be men; they were happy in their gender role” (59). He goes on to identify lesbianism in terms of two feminine women whose attraction is based on sameness, not difference. It is hard to imagine what Rees thinks he saw when he entered the lesbian bar. In the 1960s, butch-femme would still have been a cultural dominant in British lesbian bar culture, and it is unlikely that the scene presenting itself to Rees was a kind of *Bargirls* lipstick lesbianism. What probably characterized the scene before him was an array of gender-deviant bodies in recognizable butch-femme couplings. Because he needs to assert a crucial difference between himself and lesbians, however, Rees tries to deny the possibility of cross-gender-identified butch women.

In his desperation to hold the terms *lesbian* and *transsexual* apart, however, Rees goes one step further than making lesbianism into a category for women who

were “happy in their gender role.” He marks out the difference in terms of sexual aim as well as sexual and gender identity—focusing, in other words, on the partner of the FTM for evidence of the distinctiveness of transsexual maleness. Rees claims to find a medical report confirming that lesbians and transsexuals are totally different. The report, Rees writes, suggests that transsexuals “do not see themselves as lesbians before treatment, hate their partners seeing their bodies. It added that the partners of female-to-males are normal heterosexual women, not lesbians, and see their lovers as men, in spite of their lack of a penis. The partners were feminine, many had earlier relations with genetic males and often experienced orgasms with their female-to-male partners for the first time” (59). This passage signals some of the problems attending this attempt to separate transsexual and lesbian identities. While one can sympathize with the desire not to be misidentified, Rees’s need to stress the lack of masculine identification on the part of some lesbians inevitably leads him to a conservative attempt to reorder sex and gender categories that are otherwise in danger of becoming scrambled. Here, Rees attempts to locate difference in the desires of the FTM’s partner and unwittingly distinguishes between these women as “normal heterosexual women” and lesbians. Lesbianism, from this FTM perspective, suddenly becomes a pathologized category contrasted to the properly heterosexual and gender-normative aims of the male transsexual and his feminine partner. Furthermore, this “normal heterosexual woman” finds her perfect mate in the FTM and indeed, we are told, often experiences orgasm with him “for the first time.” This need to identify the feminine partner of the FTM with normal sexual aims and desires unravels later in the book when Rees reports his difficulty in maintaining a relationship. After several disastrous tries, he resigns himself to living asexually alone and tries to admit his own responsibility in the string of bad relationships: “My conclusion is that my lack of success must be due to my lack of acceptability as a person” (134). However, he quickly turns this judgment back onto his partners, commenting: “One flaw has been my appalling lack of judgement.” In other words, Rees has not found a good relationship because he has made bad choices, meaning that ultimately the women are to blame. While a distinction between lesbian and FTM positions might be an important one to sketch out, there is always the danger that the effort to mark the territory of FTM subjectivity might fall into homophobic assertions about lesbians and sexist formulations of women in general.

Jay’s distinction between the stone butch and the FTM, Martino’s horror of the slippage between homosexual and transsexual, and Rees’s categorical distinctions between lesbians and the “normal heterosexual” partners of FTMs also echo in various informal bulletins that currently circulate on transgender discussion

lists on the Internet. In bulletins offering tips from one FTM to another on how to pass as a man, many of the tips focus almost obsessively on the care that must be taken not to look like a butch lesbian. Some tips tell guys to dress preppy rather than in the standard jeans and leather jacket look of the butch. Transsexual men are warned against certain haircuts (punk styles or crew cuts) that are said to be popular among butches. Most of these lists seem to place no particular political or even cultural value upon the kinds of masculinity they mandate, but they obviously steer transsexual men away from transgressive or alternative masculine styles and toward a conservative masculinity.³¹ One wonders whether another list of tips should circulate advising transsexual men how not to be mistaken for straights, Republicans, or bankers.

Finally, in relation to the project of making concrete distinctions between butch women and transsexual males, all too often such distinctions serve the cause of heteronormativity by consigning homosexuality to pathology and by linking transsexuality to new heteronormative forms. For example, in a popular article on FTMs that appeared in the *New Yorker*, Amy Bloom interviews several FTMs and sex reassignment surgeons to try to uncover the motivations and mechanics of so-called high-intensity transsexualism.³² Bloom comments upon the history of transsexualism, the process of transition, and the multiple, highly invasive surgeries required for sex reassignment from female to male. She interviews a young white FTM who sees his transsexualism as a birth defect that needs correction, as well as several older white FTMs, one Latino FTM, and one black FTM who have varying accounts of their gender identities. Bloom spends much time detailing the looks of the men she interviews. A young FTM, Lyle, is “a handsome, shaggy graduating senior,” and James Green is a chivalrous man with a “Jack Nicholson smile”; Loren Cameron is “a not uncommon type of handsome, cocky, possibly gay man” with “a tight, perfect build”; Luis is a “slightly built, gentle South American” (40). “So what’s the problem?” you might think—these are some important descriptions of what transsexual men look like. They look, in fact, like other men. Bloom quickly admits that she finds herself in flirtatious heterosexual dynamics with her charming companions, dynamics that quickly shore up what she sees as the essential differences between men and women. That’s the problem. She reports, for example, sitting in her rental car with James Green and not being able to find the dimmer switch for the headlights; when Green finds it for her, she comments, “He looks at me exactly as my husband has on hundreds of occasions: affectionate, pleased, a little charmed by this blind spot of mine” (40). Later, over dinner with Green, she notices, “He does not say, ‘Gee, this is a lot of food,’ or anything like that. Like a man he just starts eating” (40).

Bloom's descriptions of her interviewees and her accounts of her interactions with them raise questions about mainstream attitudes toward FTM transsexuals versus mainstream attitudes toward masculine lesbians. In a similar article on butch lesbians, would Bloom comment so approvingly upon their masculinity? Would she notice a butch woman's muscular build, another butch's wink, another's "Jack Nicholson smile"? Would she be aware of their eating habits, their aptitudes for mechanical pursuits? The answer, of course, is a resounding no, and indeed Bloom reflects upon her meetings with these handsome transsexual men as follows: "I expected to find psychologically disturbed, male-identified women so filled with self-loathing that it had even spilled into their physical selves, leading them to self-mutilating, self-punishing surgery. Maybe I would meet some very butch lesbians, in ties and jackets and chest binders, who could not, would not accept their female bodies. I didn't meet these people. I met men" (41).

What a relief for Bloom that she was spared interaction with those self-hating masculine women and graced instead by the dignified presence of men. Posttransition, we must remember at all times, many formerly lesbian FTMs become heterosexual men, living so-called normal lives. For people like Amy Bloom, this is a cause for celebration.

In her interaction with a black FTM, however, Bloom's interview questions actually raise some interesting issues. Michael, unlike Green and Cameron, is not part of an urban FTM community. He lives a quiet and somewhat secretive life and shies away from anything that might reveal his transsexuality. Michael finds a degree of acceptance from his family and coworkers and strives for nothing more than this tolerance. He articulates his difference from some other transsexuals: "I was born black. I don't expect people to like me, to accept me. Some transsexuals, especially the white MTFs—they're in shock after the transition. Loss of privilege, loss of status; they think people should be thrilled to work side by side with them. Well people do not go to work in mainstream America hoping for an educational experience. I didn't expect anyone to be happy to see me—I just expected, I demanded a little tolerance" (49). Michael is the only FTM in the whole article to mention privilege and the change in social status experienced by transsexuals who pass. He clearly identifies the differences among transsexuals in terms of race and class, and he speaks of lowered expectations based on a lifetime of various experiences of intolerance. Bloom makes little comment on Michael's testimony, and she does not make a connection between what he says and what the white FTMs say. But Michael's experience is crucial to the politics of transsexualism, which quite obviously reproduces other political struggles going on in other cultural

locations. In America, there is a huge difference between becoming a man of color and becoming a white man, and these differences are bound to create gulfs within transsexual communities. They will undoubtedly also resonate in the border wars between butches and FTMs. While some FTMs find strength in the notion of identity politics, others find their identities and loyalties divided by their various affiliations. As in so many other identity-based activist projects, a single axis of identification is a luxury most people cannot afford.

Female-to-Male

My aim here and in “F2M” has been to focus upon certain categories of butchness without presuming that they represent early stages of transsexual identity within some progressive model of transgender identity and without losing their specificity as masculine identifications within a female body. Just as there is obviously much tension between the categories “lesbian” and “FTM,” there are even tensions between “lesbian” and “butch.” As I have been using *butch* here, it obviously refers to some form of dyke masculinity as well as to a twin history of lesbianism and female masculinity. But this shared and overlapping history does not mean that female masculinity has not often been cast as a thorn in the side of lesbian self-definition. All too often, as Billy suggests above, the lesbian butch has been pressured to forgo her masculinity and attest to a positive sense of female embodiment. In Feinberg’s novel *Stone Butch Blues*, for example, the butch he/she Jess Goldberg fights with her femme-turned-feminist girlfriend about acceptable forms of female masculinity. “You’re a woman,” Theresa tells Jess, who responds, “I’m a he-she. That’s different.”³³ Jess goes on to tell Theresa that s/he is not a lesbian. The distinction that some butches need to make between lesbianism and butchness hinges on a distinction between sexual and gender identities. *Lesbian*, obviously, refers to sexual preference and to some version of the “woman-loving woman.” *Butch*, on the other hand, bears a complex relation of disidentification with femininity and femaleness and, in terms of sexual orientation, could refer to “woman-loving butch” or “butch-loving butch.”

The places where the divisions between butch and FTM become blurry have everything to do with embodiment. As Jordy Jones suggests, many of those who take hormones might not make transgendered subjective identifications, while many self-identified transgendered men might not take hormones or pursue surgeries. Indeed, the labels *butch* and *transsexual* mark yet another gender fiction, the fiction of clear distinctions between categories. In “F2M,” I used the refrain

“There are no transsexuals. We are all transsexuals” to point to the inadequacy of such a category in an age of profound gender trouble. I recognize, of course, the real and particular history of the transsexual and of transsexual surgery, hormone treatment, and transsexual rights discourse. I also recognize that there are huge and important differences between genetic females who specifically identify as men and genetic females who feel comfortable with female masculinity. There are real and physical differences between female-born men who take hormones, have surgery, and live as men and female-born butches who live some version of gender ambiguity. But there are also many situations in which those differences are less clear than one might expect. There are many butches who pass as men and many transsexuals who present as gender ambiguous, as well as many bodies that cannot be classified as either transsexual or butch. While I admit we are not all transsexual, many bodies are gender strange to some degree or another. It is time to complicate the models that assign gender queerness only to transsexual bodies and gender normativity to all others.

We are at present in the midst of a Foucauldian “reverse discourse” on transsexuality and transgenderism.³⁴ As this process takes shape around the definitions of *transsexual* and *transgender*, it is extremely important to recognize the queerness of these categories, their instability, and their interpretability. While identity continues to be the most efficient basis for political organizing, we have seen within various social movements in the last decade that identity politics must give way to some form of coalition if a political movement is to be successful. The current discourse in some FTM circles, therefore, that sets up gay and lesbian politics and communities as enemies of transgender definition is as pernicious as the gay and lesbian tendencies to ignore the specificities of transsexual political needs and demands.³⁵ Furthermore, the simple opposition of transsexual versus gay and lesbian masks many other lines of affiliation and coalition that already exist within multiply queer communities in the United States: it masks, for example, the fact that gay/lesbian-versus-transsexual/transgender opposition is very much a concern in white queer contexts but not necessarily in queer communities of color. Many immigrant queer groups have successfully integrated transgender definitions into their conceptions of community.³⁶

My intent here is not to vilify FTM transsexualism as simply a reconsolidation of dominant masculinity. But I do want to point carefully to the places where such a reconsolidation threatens to take place. In academic conversations, transsexualism has been used as both the place of gender transgression and the marker of gender conservatism. Transsexualism is neither essentially transgres-

sive nor essentially conservative, as I have been arguing, and perhaps it becomes a site of such contestation because it is not yet clear what the politics of transsexualism will look like. Indeed, the history of FTM transsexuality is still in the process of being written. As FTM communities emerge in urban settings in the United States, it becomes clear that their relations to the history of medicine, the history of sexuality, and the history of gender are only now taking shape. One attempt to chart this history in relation to a more general history of transsexualism and medical technology reveals what we might call the essentially contradictory politics of transsexualism. In *Changing Sex*, Bernice Hausman details meticulously the dependence of the category “transsexual” upon medical technologies and in turn the dependence of the very concept of gender upon the emergence of the transsexual. Several times in the course of the book, Hausman rejects the notion that we can read gender as an ideology without also considering it as a product of technological relations. While this argument marks a crucial contribution to the study of gender and technology, Hausman unfortunately attributes too much power to the medical configuration of transsexual definition. She claims that the transsexual and the doctor codependently produce transsexual definitions and that therefore transsexual agency can be read “through their doctors’ discourses.” She develops this notion of an interdependent relationship between transsexuals and medical technology to build up to a rather astounding conclusion:

By demanding technological intervention to “change sex,” transsexuals demonstrate that their relationship to technology is a dependent one. . . . Demanding sex change is therefore part of what constructs the subject as a transsexual: it is the mechanism through which transsexuals come to identify themselves under the sign of transsexualism and construct themselves as subjects. Because of this we can read transsexuals’ agency through their doctors’ discourses, as the demand for sex change was instantiated as the primary symptom (and sign) of the transsexual.³⁷

Sex change itself has become a static signifier in this paragraph, and no distinction is upheld between FTM sex change and MTF sex change. No power is granted to the kinds of ideological commitments that doctors might have that could influence their thinking about making vaginas versus making penises. Because sex change rhetoric has been used mostly in relation to MTF bodies, the FTM and his relation to the very uncertain process of demanding and completing hormonal and surgical sex change is completely lost.

Hausman's book, I should stress, is intellectually stimulating and historically rich, and it undoubtedly will change the way that gender is conceived in relation to both transsexual and nontranssexual bodies. But the particular border wars between butches and FTMs that concern me and Hale are obscured in studies like Hausman's. Future studies of transsexuality and of lesbianism must attempt to account for historical moments when the difference between gender deviance and sexual deviance is hard to discern.³⁸ The history of inversion and of those people who identified themselves as invertes (Radclyffe Hall, for example) still does represent a tangle of cross-gender identification and sexual preference that is not easily separated out or comfortably accounted for under the heading of "lesbian." There is not, furthermore, one history to be told here (the history of medical technology) about one subject (the transsexual). There are many histories of bodies that escape and elude medical taxonomies, of bodies that never present themselves to the physicians' gaze, of subjects who identify within categories that emerge as a consequence of participation in sexual communities and not in relation to medical or psychosexual research.

Perhaps because these categories are so difficult to disentangle, a new category (which I have been using here) has emerged in recent years: "transgender," which describes a gender identity that is at least partially defined by gender transitivity but that might well stop short of transsexual surgery. Inevitably, it becomes a catchall term, and this somewhat lessens its effect. Toward the end of her book, Hausman attempts to stave off criticisms of her work based upon emergent notions of transgenderism. She acknowledges that transgender discourse seems to counter her claims that transsexuals are produced solely within medical discourse and that this discourse actually suggests "a fundamental antipathy to the regulatory mode of medical surveillance" (195). Hausman manages to discount such an effect of transgender discourse by arguing that "the desire to celebrate and proliferate individual performances as a way to destabilize 'gender' at large is based on liberal humanist assumptions of self-determination" (197). This is a superficial dismissal of much more complicated and ongoing sociopolitical projects. Transgender discourse in no way necessarily argues that people should just pick up new genders and eliminate old ones or proliferate genders at will simply because gendering is available as a self-determining practice. Rather, transgender discourse asks only that we recognize the nonnormative genders already in circulation and at present under construction.

Hausman's analysis works against the articulation of this transgender discourse, however, to the extent that she recontains gender dysphoria in the figure of the transsexual. Having argued strenuously that transsexual autobiographies col-

lude in the construction of notions of an authentic sex, Hausman attempts to ease her critical tone and express some empathy for the transsexual condition by commenting earnestly: “Those of us who are not transsexuals may wonder what it is like to feel oneself in the ‘wrong body’” (174)! The idea that only transsexuals experience the pain of a “wrong body” shows an incredible myopia about the trials and tribulations of many forms of perverse embodiment. Despite the use of scare quotes, it nonetheless neatly ascribes gender confusion and dysphoria once again to transsexuals, and it efficiently constructs a model of “right body” experience that applies, presumably, to people like Hausman. While part of the motivation of a transgender discourse is to produce what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in *Epistemology of the Closet*, calls “universalist” models of gender identity in which all gender identities (not just the unorthodox ones) fall under scrutiny, Hausman does exactly the opposite.³⁹ She resists a universalizing model of gender identification and maintains fictions of gender that render transsexuality synonymous with pathology and delusion, that position herself as normally gendered and embodied and thus not subject to the critical gaze, and that elide nontranssexual forms of perverse embodiment and identification.

Border Wars

Because the production of gender and sexual deviance takes place in multiple locations (the doctor’s office, the operating room, the sex club, the bedroom, the bathroom) and because the discourses to which gender and sexual deviance are bound also emerge in many different contexts (medical tracts, queer magazines, advice columns, films and videos, autobiographies), the categories of “transsexual” and “butch” are constantly under construction. However, in the border wars between butches and transsexual FTMs, FTMs are often cast as those who cross borders (of sex, gender, bodily coherence), while butches are left as those who stay in one place. The use of the term *border war* is both apt and problematic for this reason. On the one hand, the idea of a border war sets up some notion of territories to be defended, ground to be held or lost, permeability to be defended against. On the other hand, a border war suggests that the border is at best slippery and porous. In “No Place Like Home,” Prosser critiques queer theory for fixing on “the transgendered crossing in order to denaturalize gender,” and he claims that queer border-crossing positions itself against “the homeliness of identity politics.”⁴⁰ For Prosser, such a move leaves the transsexual man with no place to go and leaves him languishing in the “uninhabitable space—the borderlands in between, where passing as either gender might prove quite a challenge” (488–89).

While queers might celebrate the space in-between, Prosser suggests, the transsexual rushes onward to find the space beyond, “the promise of home on the other side” (489). “Home,” as one might imagine in relation to Prosser’s model, is represented as the place in which one finally settles into the comfort of one’s true and authentic gender.

Prosser thinks that queer theory (specifically, actually, my “F2M”) celebrates the in-between space as full of promise and “freedom and mobility for the subject” (499), while transsexual theory embraces place, location, and specificity. The queer butch, in other words, represents fluidity to the transsexual man’s stability, even as she represents stability (by staying in a female body) to the transsexual man’s fluidity (gender crossing). There is little to no recognition here of the trials and tribulations that confront the butch who for whatever reasons (concerns about surgery/hormones, feminist scruples, desire to remain in a lesbian community, lack of successful phalloplasty models) decides to make a home in the body with which she was born. Even more alarming, there is little to no recognition of the fact that many transsexuals also live and die in those inhospitable territories “in-between.” It is true that many transsexuals do transition in order to leave somewhere, to be somewhere else, and to put the geographies of ambiguity behind them. Many postoperative MTFs remain in between, however, because they cannot pass as women. Many transsexuals who pass fully clothed have bodies that, naked, are totally ambiguous. Some transsexuals cannot afford all the surgeries necessary to complete sex reassignment (if there is such a thing) and wind up making their homes where they are. Some people who self-define as transsexual do not define their transsexuality in relation to a strong desire for penises or vaginas and might experience the desire to be transgender or queer more strongly than the desire to be male or female. Furthermore, as Hale remarked to me, “there are limits on our bodies’ plasticities (e.g., my body shape will never be acceptably male to me).”⁴¹

If the borderlands are “uninhabitable” for some transsexuals who imagine that home is just across the border, imagine what a challenge they present to those subjects who do not believe that such a home exists, either metaphorically or literally. Prosser’s cartography of gender relies upon a belief in the two territories of male and female, divided by a flesh border and crossed by surgery and endocrinology. The queer cartography that he rejects prefers the charting of hybridity. Queer hybridity is far from the ludic and giddy mixing that Prosser imagines and is more a recognition of the dangers of investing in comforting but tendentious notions of home. Some bodies are never at home, some bodies cannot simply cross from point A to point B, some bodies recognize and live with the inherent insta-

bility of identity. These distinctions do not map onto categories “transsexual” and “nontranssexual” in an easy one-to-one correspondence. Many of the reasons that butches make themselves at home in often indescribably alien female bodies sound very like the reasons that some transsexuals remain ambiguous: lack of funds, body limits, attachment to gender queerness. Furthermore, some butches might feel that unless medical technology can produce a fully functional penis, the transition is not worthwhile.

As Gayle Rubin remarks in her essay on the varieties of butchness, “Butches vary in how they relate to their female bodies.”⁴² She goes on to show that “forms of masculinity are molded by experiences and expectations of class, race, ethnicity, religion, occupation, age, subculture, and individual personality” (470). Rubin also casts the tensions between butches and FTMs as border wars (she calls them “frontier fears”), and she notes that the border between these two modes of identification is permeable at least in part because “no system of classification can successfully catalogue or explain the infinite vagaries of human diversity” (473). Rubin advocates gender and sexual (as well as other kinds of) diversity not only as a political strategy but moreover as simply the only logically adequate response to the enormous range of masculinities and genders that we produce.

I also want to argue here against monolithic models of gender variance that seem to emerge out of the present loaded and intense discussions of butchness and transsexuality, and I want to support a call for gender diversity. At the same time, however, it is important to stress that not all models of masculinity are equal. As butches and FTMs begin to lay claims to the kinds of masculinities we have produced in the past and are generating in the present, it is crucial that we also pay careful attention to the functions of homophobia and sexism in particular within the new masculinities. There are transsexuals, and we are not all transsexuals; gender is not fluid, and gender variance is not the same wherever we find it. Specificity is all. As gender-queer practices and forms continue to emerge, presumably the definitions of *gay*, *lesbian*, *transsexual*, and *transgender* will not remain static, and we will produce new terms to delineate what the current terms cannot. In the meantime, gender variance in and of itself (like sexual variance in and of itself) cannot be relied upon to produce a radical and oppositional politics simply by virtue of representing difference. Radical interventions come from prolonged, intensive political and cultural struggle against real enemies such as the Christian Right and the Republican Party, transphobes and homophobes. I suggest that butches and FTMs alike think carefully about the kinds of men or masculine beings that we become and lay claim to: alternative masculinities, ultimately, will

fail to change existing gender hierarchies to the extent that they fail to be feminist, antiracist, anti-elitist, and queer.

Notes

I would like to thank Susan Stryker, Esther Newton, Gayatri Gopinath, Jay Prosser, and especially C. Jacob Hale for their contributions to this article.

1. George Chauncey Jr., "From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: The Changing Medical Conceptualization of Female 'Deviance,'" in *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*, ed. Kathy Piess and Christina Simmons (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 87–117; Esther Newton, "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 9 (1984): 557–75.
2. Valerie Traub, "The Psychomorphology of the Clitoris," *GLQ* 2 (1995): 81–113.
3. Gayle Rubin, "Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender, and Boundaries," in *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader*, ed. Joan Nestle (Boston: Alyson, 1992), 466–83; Lisa Duggan, "The Trials of Alice Mitchell: Sensationalism, Sexology, and the Lesbian Subject in Turn-of-the-Century America," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 18 (1993): 791–814.
4. Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," *GLQ* 1 (1994): 237–54; Bernice L. Hausman, *Changing Sex: Transsexualism, Technology, and the Idea of Gender* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995).
5. See <http://www.actlab.utexas.edu/~sandy/hale.rules.html>.
6. Judith Halberstam, "F2M: The Making of Female Masculinity," in *The Lesbian Postmodern*, ed. Laura Doan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 210–28.
7. Sandy Stone, "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, ed. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (New York: Routledge, 1991), 280–304.
8. Isabella, review essay, *FTM Newsletter* 29 (January 1995): 13–14, quotation on 13.
9. *Ibid.*, 14.
10. Janice Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* (Boston: Beacon, 1979). While Janice Raymond saw MTF transsexuals as men and women who were invading women's space and even women's bodies, my concerns about transsexuality were particular to FTM transition and the potential for transsexual men to leave feminism far behind and become conservative males.
11. Halberstam, "F2M," 212.
12. The tendency to equate lesbian desire with fluidity is too general to trace in all its specificity, but it surfaces most clearly in the so-called sex debates documented by critics such as Alice Echols ("The Taming of the Id: Feminist Sexual Politics,

1968–1983,” in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole S. Vance [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984], 50–72) and Lisa Duggan and Nan D. Hunter (*Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture* [New York: Routledge, 1996]). The idea that lesbian sex should be autonomous from male sexuality and from butch-femme roles and thus fluid has been articulated by sex-negative feminists such as Sheila Jeffreys and Marilyn Frye. My point here, however, is that the belief in the sexual fluidity of lesbian desire cannot be limited to the puritanical impulses of a few feminists. Rather, in magazines, fanzines, and all manner of popular lesbian representation, androgyny—or the movement back and forth between femininity and masculinity—has been held up as a virtue. Indeed, very often queer theories of gender are translated by popular media into celebrations of fluidity. To give just one example, in a recent *New York Times* article about a Guggenheim Museum show on gender and photography, the writer commented that the show’s curator “seems to subscribe to the position (popular with many theorists) that gender is fluid and artificial, that masculine and feminine are not simple binaries but a continuum shaped and constructed collaboratively by society, the family and the individual.” Roberta Smith, “Decoding La Difference: Gender as Dress and Pose,” *New York Times*, 17 January 1997, C1, C29.

13. Jay Prosser, “No Place Like Home: The Transgendered Narrative of Leslie Feinberg’s *Stone Butch Blues*,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 41 (1995): 483–514.
14. Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Firebrand, 1993).
15. Prosser, “No Place Like Home,” 490.
16. Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come* (New York: World View Forum, 1992), 5.
17. Jordy Jones, “Another View of F2M,” *FTM Newsletter* 29 (January 1995): 14–15, quotation on 15.
18. Stone, “*Empire Strikes Back*.”
19. Donna Minkowitz, “Gender Outlaw,” *Village Voice*, 19 April 1994, 24–30.
20. Ginsberg also blurs the lines between racial and gender passing and makes the two analogous, thereby losing sight of the very different social and political structures of gender and race. Elaine K. Ginsberg, “Introduction: The Politics of Passing,” in *Passing and the Fictions of Identity*, ed. Elaine K. Ginsberg (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 1–18, quotation on 3.
21. Deva, “FTM/Female-to-Male: An Interview with Mike, Eric, Billy, Sky, and Shadow,” in *Dagger: On Butch Women*, ed. Lily Burana, Roxxie, and Linnea Due (Pittsburgh: Cleis Press, 1994), 154–67.
22. Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis, “‘They Was No One to Mess With’: The Construction of a Butch Identity in the 1940s and 1950s,” in *The Persistent Desire*, 62–80; Rubin, “Of Catamites and Kings.”
23. Jones, “Another View of F2M,” 15.

24. Heather Findlay, "What is Stone Butch—Now?" *Girlfriends* 2 (March/April 1995): 20–21, 44–45.
25. *Ibid.*, 45.
26. I have maintained the female-gender pronouns used in the article here until I refer to Jay as an FTM, and then I use male pronouns.
27. Findlay, "What is Stone Butch—Now?" 44.
28. For a counterexample to Jay's claim, see Jan Morris's account of her many amusing preoperative experiences as a gender-ambiguous person in *Pleasures of a Tangled Life* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1989), 8–9.
29. Mario Martino with Harriett, *Emergence: A Transsexual Autobiography* (New York: Crown, 1977).
30. Mark Rees, *Dear Sir or Madam: The Autobiography of a Female-to-Male Transsexual* (London: Cassell, 1996).
31. Unfortunately, I cannot provide a citation for such a list because the posts are often anonymous and circulate only within a limited group with no intention of becoming public.
32. Amy Bloom, "The Body Lies," *The New Yorker*, 18 July 1994, 38–49, quotation on 38.
33. Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*, 147.
34. In *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault analyzes the strategic production of sexualities and identities and proposes the concept of a "reverse discourse" to explain the web of relations between power, discourse, sexuality, and resistance. He argues that resistance is always already embedded in power "as an irreducible opposite" and that therefore resistance cannot come from an outside. The multiplicity of power means that there is no opposite, no site of resistance where power has not already been. Foucault suggests, however, that it is possible to form a "reverse discourse" in which a category that might have been used to oppress becomes imbued with new potentials for resisting domination, thus transforming a debased position into a challenging presence. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980), 96.
35. Again, this is difficult to document if only because transsexual discourse is at present still in the making. I am thinking here of the "Transformations" Conference (Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies, City University of New York, 2 May 1996) at which a group of transsexual panelists insistently defined their political strategies in opposition to gay and lesbian political aims, which they considered to be mainstream and transsexual insensitive.
36. Martin Manalansan, "Diasporic Deviants/Divas: How Filipino Gay Transmigrants 'Play with the World,'" in *Homosexuality in Motion: Gay Diasporas and Queer Peregrinations*, ed. C. Patton and B. Sanchez-Eppler (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

37. Hausman, *Changing Sex*, 110.
38. Hausman to her credit does look at this shared history in a section on early-twentieth-century sexology. She studies the language of inversion and claims “‘transsexual’ is not a term that can accurately be used to describe subjects exhibiting cross-sex behaviors prior to the technical capacity for sex reassignment. . . . There is no transsexuality without the surgeon” (ibid., 117).
39. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).
40. Prosser, “No Place Like Home,” 484, 486.
41. C. Jacob Hale, private E-mail to the author, 21 June 1996. This whole discussion of gender-ambiguous transsexuality is indebted to Hale’s formulations.
42. Rubin, “Of Catamites and Kings,” 470.